

Dear Representative Lesia Liss,

I am a proud teacher and have been teaching for six years. I went into this profession because I wanted to make an impact on young people's lives. During my six years of teaching, the budget has been a concern and I have become creative with the resources I do have available, but if the proposed cut by Governor Snyder goes through, I am not sure what resources will be left. I look at the faces in my classroom, some who read several years below grade level, some who come to school every day hungry, some who come from homes whose both parents are out of work to name a few, and wonder how will the education system meet the needs of students if the proposed cuts are made?

I have already heard from numerous districts rumors of layoffs, elimination of sports, arts, and technology courses, increased class sizes, and pay cuts. What kind of education will we be providing for our students if this is true? Of course, core academics should be students number one priority, but it is the art and technology courses that allow students to explore other interests and creates a well-rounded student. Think back to your education career, could you imagine only having math, science, social studies, and English language art classes? Even colleges see the importance for art and technology classes and include it as part of students' general requirements.

On top of losing elective classes, students may have large class sizes. At the secondary level, many districts already have class sizes in the upper thirties. Next year, teachers could be look at class sizes between forty and fifty students. This gives teachers approximately one minute with each student in a given period. Sure, not all students will need assistance from the teacher. Even if we increase the amount of time to two to three minutes with students who have questions, in that short of period, will we be able to answer the student's questions and make sure they understand our response?

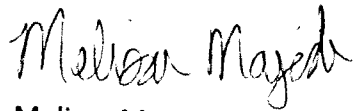
Yes, I understand that there is a budget deficit and everyone needs to make sacrifices, however, should our children and our future be the ones who make the sacrifice? If we need improve the economy of Michigan, we need to strengthen the education system. A solid education will provide the economy with people who have the skills to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. I know many might argue, that over the years we have invested in the education system, yet scores have gone down, so why should we continue to give money if it is not working. I will argue back that every year teachers face new obstacles to tackle that get in the way of educating young people. For instance, with the decline of jobs, school districts have seen an increase in students coming from poverty. Because of this, lack of parental involvement has increased because many parents are working several jobs to make ends meet and are not around to make sure their child gets to school on time, do their homework the night before, or are able to attend conferences to see why their child is struggling. There are many outside contributing factors that are beyond the control of the teacher that prevents students from being successful.

Lastly, with all the cuts many people think that teachers should make a pay cut to help make up the deficit. I know in my district, we would still be one million dollars short even if teachers took a 10% pay cut and paid 20% of their health care costs. Again, I am not against of making shared sacrifice, but it is difficult to swallow this idea with corporations may receive a tax break. In addition, a teaching degree is the third lowest paying college degree. If we

decrease it more, what kind of people will the education field attract to teach the youth of Michigan? On top of asking to take a pay cut, the teaching degree is one of the few degrees out there that requires re-certification every five years. This means that teachers constantly have to take college courses to maintain their certification, at the cost of the teacher. With the cost of college classes going up, this becomes more difficult for teachers every year. Yet, the government feels we make too much money.

Even during this difficult time, I am still proud to be a teacher and love my job. I hope you consider some of the points I have made and think about the young people of this state before making any decisions. If you do not have any children, think about someone you know who has children; would you want to take away elective classes, great teachers, and increase their class size? In conclusion, I ask that if you do not believe the points I have made then come spend a day in my shoes. I think many of our government officials are out of touch of what is really happening in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Majeski".

Melissa Majeski

March 22, 2011

Dear Government Legislators,

I am writing to express my disappointment, confusion, and even anger about what is happening with education in our state. At a time when the economy is near rock bottom, and many families already have enough worries and struggles, you are now chipping away at something that in the past had been a stable and positive place for children and the future of our state...our schools.

I work in Warren Woods Public Schools, a small district with 3 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high school. Our district also houses Macomb County's physically and otherwise health impaired students, and in the past two years our district has been struggling to keep its head above water because of the cuts you have made. We have already had to eliminate important courses such as technology, woodshop, computers, life skills, and consumer's science, as well as downsize other specials programs like physical education, art and music. Our class sizes have increased to 36 and 37 students per core class, which makes it difficult and sometimes downright impossible to give attention to students who need it and diversify lessons to best meet students' needs. We have cut staff and sports programs as well as budgets used for materials like books and writing supplies, while many teachers are now spending a lot more money from our own pockets to try and compensate for these losses so students don't feel the cuts as much. As professionals, we have seen pay freezes, pay reductions, hikes in insurance, more money taken from our checks for the retirement fund, and yet we are still required to spend our own money to take 6 credits worth of master's level classes every 5 years to stay updated, which equates to thousands of dollars out of pocket. As professional adults, we are trying our best to cope with these cuts as they affect our immediate families and our extended families of the students that we teach, but you have now bent us so far backwards, that we can no longer hope to bounce back.

Our administration just presented a PowerPoint slide show representing all of the additional cuts that are coming and how they will affect our schools. It is truly stomach turning. Even with all of the cuts we have made in the past few years, our district is still operating in the red. We are almost down to the bare bones and we still cannot cover our operating costs with the reductions you have instituted. And how ridiculous that our district has around one million left in fund equity and yet you are threatening to take this away too, when our fund equity is the only thing that has been covering us so far with these recent cuts. Even with a 10% employee pay cut (which is huge to my family since both my husband and I teach at the same school) the amount our district saves will not even cover what we will be losing in the increased retirement monies that the district pays. Your choices are killing our district and most others throughout the state, and the only reason we can see for you doing this is that you want to take over the education sector altogether and send in the Emergency Fund Managers to start running the schools as a business. Do you not realize what a colossal mistake this is? Schools are not a business. We cannot pick and choose the best product (the students) in order to turn out the best results as businesses are allowed to do. We are working with kids... kids who have many different family lives, and varied interests and skills and abilities. Teachers are professionals who have gone to undergrad and grad school for many years and continue to go to school, and workshops and in-services in order to learn new ways to educate our students in this fast paced and ever changing world. Not all kids fit into the college track. We have artistic kids, and sports minded kids, and musical kids to name just a few, and we cannot eliminate the programs that support kids that are not on the college path. We have a diverse society and we need to have schools and teachers that offer a diverse education.

Would you ever think to take a bunch of professional educators and throw them into one of the big three car companies and have them start managing one of those companies? Of course not, because educators do not have the proper background and inside knowledge to efficiently and effectively run that type of business. Yet somehow the government thinks that sending in financial managers and business minded people is the best way to run our state's educational system...a system that, if they have not been a part of, they know next to nothing about, or should we say about as much as a teacher knows about a car company.

Attacking educational funding, school programs, teachers and other school workers is not the way to improve our state's economy. Education and schools are the foundation of every child's life, since every person goes through the educational system. If anything needs to be done to improve education, it needs to be to reinstate and even increase funding for more programs and a better learning environment for students. If a large and important business company were failing, would you try to fix it by decreasing its funding source? Of course not! That would be ludicrous and even more detrimental to the company. Yet that is what we see the government, OUR GOVERNMENT, doing to the educational system in Michigan.

*Please* find another way to generate money in our state to boost the economy. Our schools need more money, and you are in the process of seriously damaging education to a point where it cannot recover if you continue to make these cuts. The repercussions of these educational cuts will be seen far and wide throughout our state in coming years in our students as they grow and enter our society and workforce with less skills, less confidence, and being less well rounded in their knowledge and experiences because of these cuts.

Sincerely,



Christine Clark

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Warren Woods Middle School Teacher

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I think when we speak airily of "health care cost reform," we are ONLY talking about having teachers and other workers contribute more to their health care costs. I have heard no talk about looking at the insurance companies' role in this. Michigan has been a cash cow for the insurance industry in general. When do we start leaning on them to make their rates more equitable? Furthermore, we need to think about what this "reform" means. It may be reasonable to ask teachers to increase what they pay for health insurance, but by taking on a higher portion of their costs, they are effectively taking a cut in pay—distinct from other proposals that public employees take a cut in pay. Many districts have already implemented salary cuts or freezes; this would be more.

The rationale I have most frequently heard is the "need" to bring public sector compensation in line with the private sector, but I have only heard this with reference to benefits. Teachers, social workers, administrators, and other school personnel must meet certain standards in order to be certified. They must then continue their education and work toward higher degrees or take courses to keep their skills up-to-date so that they can maintain their certification. These courses are not generally provided by the school districts or the state; most of this mandatory training must be done by educators on their own time and at their own expense. How often is this true in the corporate world? The state has many specific and exacting requirements that teachers must meet. While this is true of some other professions, especially in areas that impact health and safety, it is also true that teachers are not compensated comparably to doctors and engineers. A teacher's education includes student teaching, which is essentially a full-time job—except that the student teacher pays for the experience instead of the other way around. This can be similar in corporate America, since many students go through an unpaid internship to get work experience. But many of these internships *are* paid and in most cases they are not required for a degree or professional employment. The combination of low beginning salary and, for many teachers, considerable student loan debt means that many teachers are already struggling to get by.

I have been to a number of meetings, spoken with lawmakers, and testified before the House subcommittee on school aid appropriations. I was not alone—I was joined by superintendents, teachers, school board members, volunteers, and many, many parents. It worries me that untrained, inexperienced lawmakers wield such tremendous power over our schools, our cities, and our children's futures and are paying so little attention to our testimony. The experts in the field of education are not regarded as experts when it comes to the need for responsible education funding. Instead, union-bashing and teacher-bashing are common and but who else can speak for schools, school employees, and most of all, school children?

My state senator, John Pappageorge, has claimed that school aid forms the largest portion of the state budget but I have heard my other legislator, Ellen Cogen-Lipton, state that prisons and Medicaid take the lion's share. Whichever is true is not important, because it is clear that all three are areas of large public expenditure. What is important is that the three are related. What happens to kids when classrooms become too full for effective education or even effective behavior management? Kids don't learn. They

muddle along and finish school inadequately prepared for college and the work world or they drop out or are expelled. When we juxtapose these three budget items, it becomes even clearer that we need school aid to *control* the budget. Good education is how we prevent welfare and correction costs from skyrocketing.

In my dictionary, the word “sacrifice” is defined in terms of giving something up. This is something *given*, not something taken away. If it is reasonable to ask the schools to contribute to cutting costs by reducing employee compensation, then I think it is even more reasonable to ask all affected parties to give something up. I agree that the Michigan Business Tax is a bad piece of legislation and I think small businesses should be cultivated, not punished. But at the same time, I think those who wish to overhaul our old budget-thinking need to bring everyone to the table and ask everyone what they are willing to sacrifice. The schools are willing to approach their teachers to negotiate compensation. What about business? What proposals do they have that will make their taxes more equitable without destroying education funding? What about the insurance industry, the prisons, and government offices?

If you say something often enough and authoritatively enough, you will make other people believe it and you will come to believe it yourself. I have twice heard Senator Pappageorge say that “they” have tried to protect the school budget for years but now the schools have to shoulder their share of the burden. If I’ve heard him say it twice, I bet he says it a lot more than that. He may believe it. But it isn’t true. “They” didn’t protect the schools. The school aid fund was voted into existence by the people of Michigan and it is part of the state constitution. The legislature chose not to dispense the full amount of the fund for the past two years, creating a surplus while schools took cuts in their per-pupil funding. That was not protection and neither is the proposal to include higher education payments in the fund. What is more, we aren’t talking about whether to patch a few potholes now or later. We are talking about kids and their future and the ONE chance they have to get value from the third grade or the sixth grade or high school. It’s this year, schools need money now and they need to know they will have that money so they can make the budgets they are required to make by June 30. They need to know they will have money next year and the year after. What we REALLY need is elected representatives who can stand up and say, “Education and health care are the two most important services a democratic society provides to its citizens. We cannot abrogate that responsibility.” Then we need those legislators to say it over and over with authority so that they start to believe it and others start to believe it, too.

**From:** John Post <johnpost@wideopenwest.com>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/27/2011 8:03 AM  
**Subject:** Written Testimony resend - I corrected a typo or two

I teach the kids who can't be measured. As much as legislators and schools try to measure kids' learning by having them fill in bubbles on a standardized test, this isn't how all children grow and become successful. One third or more of kid brains learn best by doing, touching, seeing and moving. These are the right-brain creative-type kids who live for art class. Sir Ken Robinson points out that in divergent thinking tests that assess the ability to think creatively, kindergarten students score at the genius level. Every year of education after kindergarten sees students lose their ability to have divergent, creative thoughts. Going to school actually makes people become less creative. As a society we are educating the creativity out of our kids. This is in a time when all we hear about is keeping up with every other nation in the global economy by being innovative, smart and creative.

If you ask an elementary-age kid what day of the school week it is, they don't say Tuesday or Wednesday, they blurt out that "It's art day!" or "Gym day". This is because these are the classes where they feel like they actually get to "Do Something". Kids are all about doing. If schools started with the idea that kids want to touch, handle, manipulate and play with things in their environment and then taught them using methodology that capitalized on these types of behaviors, kids would be more engaged learners in school. Instead most of the school day is spent listening to the teacher. Walk down the hallway and peek into classrooms and you will see that in most of them the teacher is the one doing the talking. Listening is probably the most passive thing to engage in as a learner, yet that's what many kids are stuck doing everyday.

That's where I come in. I teach elementary art. I teach 800 kids in 32 classes a week. I teach about ancient history when we make clay Egyptian time capsule mummies filled with autobiographical poems and writing. I teach about mathematical forms when kids roll cylinders, spheres and cones while making clay animals. I teach about how to generate ideas and give critiques to other students in a way that is constructive and provides critical feedback while discussing individual works of art. I teach about how to compare and contrast ideas when we look at paintings of the same genre but from two different artists or cultures. Art is the one thing that is part of every culture on the planet and so the range of topics I get to teach about is the most expansive in the entire elementary curriculum. And it's the most engaging because the kids get to talk, make and most importantly - do things.

My art room is place where one third of the school population, the right-brain-learners come into their own. My room is where April who was one of my students for seven years was the best artist in the entire school, all the while spending large parts of the rest of her day in the special education room. In art she was miles ahead of every one else. April's ideas, compositions and ability to create and paint and sculpt were several grade levels above her peers, but on

standardized tests she was just another kid who didn't measure up.

Yesterday I had a heartfelt conversation with a sixth grade student named Zak. He's got black painted finger nails and told me he isn't very good at academic things. But Zak makes beautiful clay sculptures that his classmates compliment him on. So for forty-seven minutes a week, Zak gets to shine and be genuinely good at something. The rest of his week he spends as a struggling student not knowing that the reason he doesn't "get it" is that his brain learns best by doing and not by sitting and listening. He's looking forward to his graphic design class in junior high, but not much else. I mentored Zak telling him to make sure he steers his way into as many classes as he can where kids "do" things instead of signing up for electives where kids just sit and listen passively. Classes like electronics, welding, computers and auto-shop would be a perfect fit for him. Zak told me how he customized his bicycle by painting the rims yellow. When I asked him how he did it, he told me he took the entire thing apart including taking the bolts out of the wheels so he could mask off certain areas and paint the rest. Think about how much critical thinking went into solving that problem. Then think of how many cable television shows feature grown-up kids like Zak, customizing cars and motorcycles and making beautiful things. Yet the only place Zak gets to be himself during the whole school week is in art. If Zak doesn't get to take art classes and electives in school and has to measure himself by how well he does on standardized tests, then he probably will see himself as a failure. On the other hand, if schools don't lose their art programs and other hands-on electives, they will create more adults who can contribute to a vibrant economy of creators.

I teach lots of kids like April and Zak. Kids who have an amazing ability to learn and create but who don't perceive and process information by listening and taking notes. So what does school hold for them if budget cuts eliminate art and other hands-on programs simply because these programs aren't measured on a standardized test? Just the chance to be told year after year that they are behind and that it is their fault that they don't get it.

As teachers feel the pressure from administrators, legislators and the media to improve test scores, thousands of kids will be thrown out like the proverbial baby with the bath water. They aren't taught in the way they learn best, by hands-on doing. For the sake of expediency and cost they are assessed using a tool that doesn't show just how wonderful and creative they are as people.

Kids like April and Zak are the kinds of kids I will miss most when schools are forced to eliminate programs like art from the curriculum because of cuts to their budgets.

When I was taking art classes as an undergraduate in college, one of my art professors wore a little pink pin that read "Art Saves Lives". As a brash, young twenty-something-year-old I read that pin and thought "How?" Now that I have been an art teacher for over twenty years, I see how art saves lives. I see how it is the one place where so many kids get to use the part of their brain that they learn best with. It is the place where creativity and divergent thinking happen. It is the place where the square pegs don't have to fit into



the round holes and where special education kids and English Language Learners can perceive information visually and demonstrate their understanding and growth as artists by working hands-on. Art is the place where a right-brain learner feels at home in a left brain world. Art is the place where the kids who can't be measured by filling in bubbles, discover how smart, wonderful and creative they really are and if art is taken away, why would these kids even want to come to our schools?

John Post  
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Follow me on Twitter  
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**Tomiko Gumbleton - Written Testimony**

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**From:** Donna Zimmer <donnazimmer@yahoo.com>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/22/2011 9:31 PM  
**Subject:** Written Testimony

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I believe that people go into public service because they truly believe they can help make the world a better place. I have to suppose that Governor Snyder and Michigan Republicans really do not understand the damage these unprecedented cuts to education funding will do to our children. I want to show you one small snip-it of a day in my third grade classroom, and explain exactly what would be different, if the \$470 cut per pupil and district retirement contribution changes come to pass.

I know you have heard that small class size is important in elementary school. All the educational research confirms it. Children have a sweet spot for learning. In educational jargon it's called instructional level. That place where students have the background knowledge to understand, but they need a little help to really grasp the concept and make it their own. An educator's challenge is to find that sweet spot and teach to each child right at that level. The problem is that children aren't little tin soldiers. They are all over the place.

I teach in a low income Title One school. I only have three students in my classroom that were born to parents that speak English as a native language. Even with all these challenges, I have some extremely bright students. I started my day today with a group reading a novel at fifth grade level. I facilitated a discussion where students inferred characters' motivations based on their actions. After 20 minutes I dismissed that group to go back and read and summarize the next chapter. The next group was reading a fourth grade novel. They were struggling with the task of writing about the main idea of the chapter. We made some connections about something similar that had happened to one of their friends. They were able to figure out what was important. You should have seen the light bulbs go on. They were incandescent. Students practically flew to their seats to try their new understanding on the next chapter.

Since we are a Title One school, I am lucky have an excellent aide for 40 minute 4 days per week. While I was working with the advanced students, she helped our cognitively impaired student read for 20 minutes. He has worked his heart out this year to get from a level 3, where first graders should be reading in September, to a level 6, where first graders should be reading in November. Next my aide worked with our non-English speaking students. While they do not yet have the vocabulary to communicate effectively, we have managed to help them learn enough short and long vowel sounds that they are able to read at levels 12 – 14, mid first grade. This is the first time my aide has worked with this group since an emotionally impaired student joined the group last month. That student has only just rejoined the regular classroom since he attacked a teacher with scissors last year, and his learning has fallen behind. I observed the group several times, but he seemed to be doing fine. They were working on strategies to decipher unknown words.

During this time students not working with their guided reading group were reading independently or listening to a book on tape. Once my aide left, my struggling readers began getting restless, so I called them together and gave them a fluency drill where they whisper read common phrases to a partner. Now I finally was able to read with the only group in my class that is actually reading at a third grade level. We worked on the metacognitive strategy of rereading for understanding. This group of student is pretty good at reading the words. They just haven't figured out

that, if it doesn't make sense, you need to go back and figure out why. I only had ten minutes to meet with my group reading at a second grade level. So, we worked on the single strategy of using meaning to figure out unknown words.

Each of these groups is at a different point on the learning continuum, where what they need to learn next is different than the other groups. This year my class is small enough that I am able to provide that structure for them. They are all learning at their maximum potential. That's the optimum goal for which teachers strive. I couldn't be prouder of them. What will be different about next year, if these budget cuts pass?

First, federal funding is being slashed, so I will probably lose the 40 minutes of assistance I get from the Title One Aide. With the state budget cuts our school stands to lose at least two teachers, which means I will have a minimum of 8 more students in my classroom next year. Six is usually the maximum number of students in each guided reading group. That means I will have one or two more groups with two less opportunities for them to meet with a teacher each day. So instead of meeting with me and getting receiving assignments targeted to their specific needs every day, it will only happen every other day. Instead of 174 days of individualized reading instruction, they will only receive 87. And, what will they be doing on those days their group does not meet? It will have to be something they can do independently, something for which they will not need help, in other words, and something that will not really advance their learning, busy work.

This microcosm only covers the first hour of the day. In your mind extrapolate the damage caused by the budget cuts throughout the rest of the day. It's heartbreaking for a teacher to know they are not giving their kids what they need. In years past, we might short social studies or science in order to focus on the most important subject in third grade, reading. Now, we cannot, because our jobs depend on student test scores in those subjects. Every year teachers are asked to do more with less help. Oh, and by the way, we are greedy and overpaid. It's demoralizing. My job is not in jeopardy. Cuts to my pay and benefits are unwelcome, but my family can deal. My students, they are who I worry about. I want my cognitively impaired student to grow up and be able to fill out a job application and balance his checkbook. I want my emotionally impaired student to get a whiff of success, so he has a reason to control his temper. I want my gifted students to have the chance to become brain surgeons, or philosophers, or whatever they want to be. Overcrowded classrooms make it impossible for teachers to teach to the sweet spot of each child. This state needs to make sure teachers have the resources we need to help each child succeed.

Thank you,

Donna Zimmer

54429 Verona Park

Macomb, MI 48042

586-588-0246

**Tomiko Gumbleton - Written Testimony**

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**From:** kim opsasnick <kjopsasn09@yahoo.com>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/26/2011 10:50 PM  
**Subject:** Written Testimony

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April 26, 2011

Dear Ellen Cogen Lipton,

My name is Kimberly Opsasnick and I am kindergarten teacher in the Warren Consolidated School District. The Governor's proposed \$470 per-pupil cut will create financial chaos for Warren Consolidated Schools and its children. This cut, together with other cuts and new state mandates, add up to a total loss of between \$800 and \$1,100 per-pupil or about \$17 million for Warren Consolidated Schools in just one year. That's a major DISINVESTMENT in education and it spells disaster for kids.

I work at Harwood Elementary School located in Sterling Heights. Harwood's population is extremely diverse. Many of the students come to our school not able to speak English. If the governor's current budget plan is enacted, our schools have no choice left except to make large program cuts that would take away support for these students. Not only does Harwood have a high ELL population, it also has a very HIGH number of struggling families. 289 out of 407 students that attend Harwood, or 71%, are financially poor. Many of my families are in need of clothes, food, supplies, and resources. How do my students get what they need? From me of course! I use my own money and purchase backpacks, soap, pencils, crayons, books, clothes, snacks, and other items these students need.

I spend a large amount of my own money on my classroom. I purchase materials, books, and hands-on items for my students to help them excel in all areas of academics. Buying these items are not cheap! Look at how expensive these items are: <http://www.lakeshorelearning.com/seo/f%7C/Assortments/Lakeshore/ShopByCategory/language/viewall.jsp>. I try and save money by making my own versions of these centers, but this takes many hours to do. Many people seem to forget how many hours after school teachers spend on making centers and hands-on projects for their classroom. Not to mention the countless hours teachers spend reading books, attending conferences, and returning back to school to further advance their effectiveness. All of these activities cost money which each teacher is responsible to pay for.

Not only will these budget cuts affect my students' and their families, but they also affect me. Even though I have been a teacher for six years, if these cuts are passed I will no longer have a job. The district would have to lay off 220 teachers to make up this financial loss. If I somehow manage to keep my job, I will be forced to take a huge pay cut. Unfortunately, I will not be able to provide my students with the materials and resources they need (clothes, food, and supplies). I will not be able to continue to further my education (a requirement by our government) or purchase new items for my classroom based upon each new classes' needs because I will not be able to pay my own bills. This breaks my heart. I love my job, and I treat all my students as if they were one of my own. The thought of not being able to give them what they need to survive is devastating to me.

We cannot bring Michigan's economy back by lowering our investment in an educated workforce. The Governor's plan to reduce business taxes and use K-12 School Aid funds to support community colleges and universities is definitely not "shared sacrifice." Schools have already sacrificed a lot. Any more

will fall directly on the backs of our children – they are the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Opsasnick

**Tomiko Gumbleton - Written Testimony**

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**From:** <vesnam@comcast.net>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/26/2011 6:53 PM  
**Subject:** Written Testimony

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Dear legislature,

I wanted to let you know how the upcoming budget cuts to public school funding will effect me personally and professionally. I will first start by discussing how my family will be negatively impacted. I am a teacher who has two children in the Utica Community Schools. I have been the breadwinner for my family, as my husband works for Ford Motor Company and has been laid off for the last 5 1/2 months.

If the budget cuts pass, my family's income would be negatively impacted by more that \$12,000. That equates to \$1,000 per month. We would have to cut \$250 per week of our weekly budget. My husband and I would not be able to afford to have our children continue to play organized sports. We would have to cut our grocery bills by about \$75 per week. We would have to cut back on ANY extras. We would not be able to ever patronize a restaurant, as it would just not be in our budget. This would not help our local economy.

If the cuts continued and if my husband isn't called back to work soon, we would also probably have to cut back on contributing to our childrens MESP. College, the one thing that has proven to me a way to better oneself and live a prosperous life. I would have to take that away from my children. It brings tears to my eyes thinking that I cannot provide what my parents provided for me. I went to college to become a teacher, a professional. But right now, I am treated like a criminal that is making too much money and has superior health coverage. My parents' provided a college education for my brother and I after they arrived in this country about 20 years before I was born. What a great story to come to this country, get a HIGH SCHOOL education and be able to provide wonderful things for their children.

I am a college graduate with a Master's degree and half of a second Master's and I cannot afford to put money away for my children to have the same college education that my parents gave me. It is a travesty.

Professionally, I will also be impacted greatly. My principal today announced that my district has to cut \$25 million out of the budget. That means more students I have to show a year's growth with with a lot less resources. She told us today that PAPER will be ordered once and that we better figure out how to make it last. Do you find that as disheartening as I do? We will have to use PAPER sparingly in a SCHOOL! That is the most outrageous statement I have heard in long time. I don't fault her. She is just the messenger. I would expect that statement coming from a third world country, not here in the United States, not here in Michigan.

Please keep these devastating facts in mind when you vote on how much money to steal from the children of Michigan.

Sincerely,

Vesna Matovski  
Parent and Teacher

**From:** Eric Karl <ekarl2718@sbcglobal.net>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/26/2011 5:52 PM  
**Subject:** WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Dear Representative Lipton,

My testimony will be short: If I am forced to retire this year, 34 years of public service as a teacher, because of a potential severe reduction in my gross salary, I will default on my mortgage because my pension will not be enough to sustain the monthly payment, and I cannot sell my house for any capital gains because it has lost 40% of its value due to economic collapse of the housing assessment in my neighborhood in Waterford, Michigan.

I cannot afford to retire now. If my gross salary is severely cut, my state pension will be severely cut.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Eric Karl  
2718 Driftwood Dr.  
Waterford, MI 48329

**Tomiko Gumbleton - Written Testimony**

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**From:** Christine Glanert <chrisglanert@att.net>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/26/2011 8:26 PM  
**Subject:** Written Testimony

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To whom it may concern:

I understand you are looking for written testimony to how budget cuts in education will directly impact me. Thank you for taking the time to listen.

First of all, I would like to start off by saying that I am a republican. While I have voted democratic in the past, the majority of my vote and support goes to the republican party. That being said, I understand that Michigan is not doing well. However, I am very fearful and VERY upset at the cuts that are being proposed. First of all, passing the bill in which public/state employees pay 20% of their health is a bit much. Maybe understandable given the economic times we are facing. What truly upsets me is that as it reads, different sectors can bargain out of this (police, fire, state senators/legislators, etc). While educators are NOT allowed to bargain this number. Can someone tell me why it is not clear cut across the board? What is good for the goose is good for the gander right?

I am in the process of trying to adopt a child out of the foster care system. In doing so, I am helping to provide a child/ren a better home than they currently are in. This new bill as it stands will increase the amount that I will have to pay. I went from being quite certain I was going to take a sibling pair. Now, I probably will only feel comfortable providing for one child economically.

I am sure that if more cuts are made to the educational system, districts will have to find other ways to cut from teachers (more health care cuts, pay cuts, etc). If this does come to light, and I am blessed with the opportunity to adopt a child in need, many changes will happen in my household as well as my classroom. I currently am funding almost the maximum that a single person can into a 403b per year. In addition, I buy MANY supplies and items for my classroom each year. Both of these will take severe hits. If I am not able to fund my retirement in the way that I am now, who knows, I could end up on medicaid as well as medicare during retirement. This is not something I was planning on now. I currently plan to be able to support myself with my retirement savings and my pension (I am not planning on social security money to be there). Cuts will affect this plan greatly.

As for the supplies and materials and "fun" educational lessons I do, that too will become a thing of the past. No longer will I be spending money at the local stores during back to school days to purchase glue, scissors, crayons, etc. Which by the way is close to \$200 a year (that does not even touch what I do throughout the year). Think about all the teachers in Michigan that support local businesses at the beginning of the year by buying school supplies for their classroom. That money will no longer be going into the economy; something to ponder. What about my life cycle lessons that I do (caterpillars to butterflies, eggs to chicks, tadpoles to frogs)? The school can no longer afford to purchase these items for me (not to mention the food and containers that it takes to grow them). I have been supplementing this with my own money because I find the children truly learn about life cycles as they watch it happen as opposed to me reading them a book. You tell me, how would you rather learn about life cycles? This is just another small example of a change I will make in the classroom. And yet once again, I will not be buying these things from the local merchants so they too will be hurting.



I thank you for taking the time to listen to one person's life and how more cuts will affect me. I know I am not alone.

Please let's not hurt the children and the economy anymore by placing this burden on the children.

Thank you,

Chris Glanert  
Macomb County, Michigan  
chrisglanert@att.net

**Tomiko Gumbleton - WRITTEN TESTIMONY**

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**From:** Shauna Coleman <shauna.coleman@gmail.com>  
**To:** <tgumbleton@house.mi.gov>  
**Date:** 4/25/2011 9:55 PM  
**Subject:** WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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Dear Representative Lipton,

I write this to you out of utter stress, frustration and sadness. I am 32 years old and have been teaching for nine years. I went to the University of Michigan and originally wanted to go into business. Part way through my college career I had an experience with the program "America Reads" where I had the opportunity to tutor young children in the area. That sparked me to become a part of the Brothers and Sisters program and from there realized that I was meant to be a teacher. I changed my major and continued studying at the School of Education at UofM. When I graduated, I had \$35,000.00 in school loans and was told I would be lucky if I found a job. After subbing for two years I found a home in the Warren Consolidated Schools.

Did you know that every year since I have wondered if I was going to be laid off or involuntarily moved? I have wondered if I would get to continue to teach the students whose lives I became an integral part of? I wondered if I would be able to afford all of the extras for my students that I PAID FOR OUT OF MY POCKETS BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE THINGS THEY NEEDED. 5 years ago I wrote a letter to Governor Granholm begging her not to cut funding from education. 3 years ago the budget was cut even more and I was force transferred from the classroom to the Media Center. Now I am afraid we won't even have a Media program at the rate things are going. Year after year it seems we keep losing funding. If it hasn't worked in the last 5 years, what is another DEVASTATING CUT going to do for our children now?

How do all of these attacks on education affect me and the students I teach? The elementary students I teach right now have lost every after school program we have ever had. We used to run All A's, which was a program that promoted academics, art, and athletics. It was intended to target students at the 3rd through 5th grade level to keep their minds focused on the positive activities in life, rather than turning to experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Several years ago, that program was cut due to budget cuts. We still had a few programs left that we could run. Our school had a Running Club, Student Council and a Recycling Club. We were able to have a Contest Coordinator which promoted students' abilities in different areas and encouraged students to submit work for monetary prizes that would go towards their college education. We had Book Clubs. All of them have now been cut (unless you are a TITLE I school you may be able to still run some of these programs for only "some of the kids".) We have ONE club now for kids. There is nothing extra to help the students who are struggling and there is nothing to help push the students who are excelling. Teachers are working around the clock to provide the best education they can for all of their students. But at some point, there is only so much they can do in a day (and in the evenings, and weekends and on their "breaks"). We still do things voluntarily! I have had to resort to raising money on my own to get more books in our library because our funding was cut in half. We are doing a breast cancer team across 12 of our schools to show the kids that even one person makes a difference. All of this is on our own time. But it isn't enough! Our kids need consistent programs that they can look forward to being a part of and learn from.

People seem to think that MERIT PAY will motivate teachers to work harder. Don't they get it? WE WORK HARDER EVERY DAY. We rise to every occasion when people who aren't in education raise

the stakes without providing adequate funding. We adapt, we make changes and we continue to do the best for our students. WE SHOW UP EVERY DAY. But who is showing up for us and showing us that what we do is making a difference? Who is demanding that parents be held accountable or that our legislators be held accountable? Who is demanding that we have supplies for all of our students and adequate facilities and technology? My students stand to lose everything if these cuts go through.

For the first time we had lower class sizes this year. I honestly don't even know how it happened in our school. I got to see Kindergartners truly engaged in reading and writing; they were learning in a way that fostered their imaginations (many don't even know what that is anymore because so much is being crammed down their throats for testing purposes). I have watched teachers collaborating across grade levels and sharing with each other their student successes. Our scores in our building are some of the highest in the district! We don't need merit pay to be motivated to work harder! We need commitment that we won't continue to lose funding every year. We need reassurance that we won't have to tell our newest hires "it's ok, you will get rehired when the budgets don't get cut."

How will all of these attacks affect me personally? I have held off on having a family because I work so many hours over time in my school. I have run after school activities and tutor students who are struggling. I stay late to make sure that what I am teaching the kids is integrated with what they are doing in their classrooms. I didn't think I could manage doing all of the extras and raise a family as well. However, I watched many of my colleagues do just that. One teacher I work with has four children and she is one of the best teachers I have seen in our school. She has shown me you can do both! But now, with the \$8,000.00 pay cut that I already took last year due to programs being cut, on top of the 3% Healthcare tax, the looming 10% pay cut across the board and the possible 20% pay towards health care costs... I don't even think I can keep my house let alone begin a family. I have \$50,000.00 in school loans (because yes, I had to go back and get my Masters degree because that is what teachers have to do... and it is out of our pocket.) That isn't including my husband's \$30,000.00 for his schooling. I have to continue to take classes and on top of that click on a button on [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov)'s website to pay \$160 to keep my teaching certificate. I have been teaching for 9 years. It was finally after four years where I felt I could finally give up my second job at a restaurant and now I am considering having to pick that up again? The government wants us to be healthy so our health care won't cost so much. So I spend extra money going to the gym and running on my own time. I am an overall healthy person. Yet my health care benefits are being attacked because why? Because everyone else has taken cuts in health care? When everyone else was getting a 3% cost of living raise, we were asking to maintain our health care benefits in lieu of a large raise. We knew that we were better off with keeping good health care and that is why we BARGAINED FOR THAT. That is what is great about our ability to come to an agreement collectively with our district.

When does it all stop? How is everything that is wrong with the budget all of a sudden seem to be the fault of the educators and unions?

I am worried that with the possibility of tenure law being eliminated, that my voice for my students and my career will be stifled. If I don't feel confident in standing up for what is right for education and for my students, then what is to become of my teaching? I am a good teacher! I work hard to do what is best for the students and my school every day. What happens when one thing I do doesn't fit with an administrator's agenda? I am fired without due process? Tenure was put in place for a reason. Does it need reforming? Possibly. But MEA's A+ agenda visits this. Why isn't this being considered when legislation is being proposed? Why is it assumed that tenure is "bad" and protecting "ineffective teachers"? Why isn't the focus also on administrators not following proper procedures in documenting someone's ineffectiveness?

Our students and teachers are the future. We have continually worked with less and just can't do it

anymore. If we are so important and valuable, so much so that one representative wants to make striking laws even stricter, (his words are that educators are too valuable to allow to strike) then why aren't we valuable enough to at least fight for our own working conditions and pay? Why aren't we valuable enough to be relied on to make good decisions for our students? Why isn't Governor Snyder working with the ACTUAL PEOPLE WHO ARE THERE WITH AND FOR THE KIDS EVERY DAY?

Our school districts will be devastated with these outrageous cuts. We ALL stand to lose, even if some can't see it. Please consider helping to stop these outrageous attacks on the working class, the students, the poor and the elderly. Help us to find solutions rather than create more problems. Did anyone think in all of this time that has been spent on creating all of these attacks on unions and teachers that we might have come up with an actual, working solution by now? All this time and money spent on ridiculous legislation that is clearly only being put forth to stifle workers could have been avoided if Governor Snyder was willing to work with us.

I sincerely thank you for your time in collecting these written testimonies. It is my hope that you will be able to help stop these attacks.

Yours in Education,  
Shauna Coleman